



News Release

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Board of Pharmacy votes to drop rulemaking on patient access to medications

Members reviewed additional information before vote

OLYMPIA — The state Board of Pharmacy today voted to halt the rulemaking process regarding patient access to time-sensitive medications, concluding the existing rules adequately remove any barriers.

The vote followed a decision in November to continue the process while board staff researched pharmacy stocking, specialty pharmacies, and time-sensitive medications. The staff also clarified the effect of the current pharmacy stocking and pharmacist responsibility rules. After reviewing the new information and using the additional time to continue reading thousands of public comments, the board concluded existing rules protect and assure patient access to medications when they need them. The vote today was 5-to-1 with one abstention.

The board opened the rulemaking process in August to see whether additional rules would improve and better assure patients have access to medications. The current rules apply to all medications, though the issue centers on drugs that some pharmacies and pharmacists are unwilling or unable to stock and dispense, including emergency contraceptives.

Board members reviewed thousands of public comments before discussing the best course of action. Many public comments were heard at two stakeholder meetings; more than 5,000 comments were received in writing.

The board adopted its current rules on pharmacy and pharmacist responsibility in 2007. Under those rules, pharmacies must assure all valid prescriptions in stock are delivered when needed for effective use. Individual pharmacists may decline to dispense medicines if the pharmacy has policies and procedures in place to provide timely access to medications.

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These rules have been the subject of a lawsuit, which has been on hold during this process.

Information on the [access to medications rules](http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/ATM/Default.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/ATM/Default.htm) is available online.

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